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DEPT FOR EUR/RUS WARLICK AND HOLMAN  
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DHS FOR STEIN AND MCCREERY  
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH RUSSIAN TRANSPORT  
MINISTER LEVITIN

¶1. (SBU) Summary. In a January 24 meeting with the Ambassador, Minister of Transportation Igor Levitin pressed for resolution of the state flights issue and urged the next round of bilateral civil aviation negotiations be held in Moscow. He suggested that armed marshals on U.S. flights to Russia might be possible under the auspices of an intergovernmental agreement. He raised concerns about delays in code-sharing between Sky Team members and Aeroflot and problems faced by Aeroflot passengers transiting New York. The Ministry is also ready to sign a rail equipment testing agreement with the U.S. On passenger name recognition, a formal agreement may be in order once amendments addressing the legal gaps in the current arrangements pass the legislature. Levitin urged Transportation Secretary Peters to join him at the May European Ministerial on Transportation Security in Europe, and reiterated his invitation to Secretary Peters and TSA Administrator Hawley to come to

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Moscow immediately before the Ministerial for the proposed DOT conference on ground transport. End Summary.

STATE FLIGHTS

¶2. (SBU) Levitin was well-versed in the details of the state flights issue and was clear about his desire to see this long-standing bilateral problem resolved. He complained that the U.S. owes Russia navigation fees for more than 2000 flights. He welcomed next week's planned bilateral consultations and said he hoped an agreement could be reached soon.

CIVIL AVIATION NEGOTIATIONS

¶3. (SBU) Responding to a Russian request for bilateral civil negotiations at the end of February in Moscow, the Ambassador offered instead negotiations the week of March 26 in Washington. Gennady Loschonov, chief civil negotiator for the Russian side, replied that the last two rounds had been in Washington. He and the Minister noted that the GOR would prefer talks in Moscow, which the Ambassador agreed to relay.

#### PASSENGER NAME RECOGNITION (PNR)

14. (SBU) The Ambassador expressed appreciation for the Minister's efforts to move PNR-related legislation through the Duma. Levitin said that assuming his Ministry's proposed amendments to the Russian Air Traffic Code become law, the U.S. and Russia should pursue an official agreement to share passenger data to take the place of the ad hoc arrangements currently in force.

#### FLIGHT MARSHALS (FAMS)

15. (SBU) Levitin said that, like ICAO, the GOR believes armed marshals on planes more of a security liability than an asset and noted it is against Russian law for foreigners to carry arms on airplanes. However, if the United States chooses to press the issue, we could pursue a bilateral agreement on flight marshals (such as Russia's with Israel) that would permit U.S. flight marshals to be on board U.S. carrier flights. He cautioned, however, that the Russian inter-agency process preceding such a negotiation (which would include the Ministries of Interior, Customs, and Border Security) would likely be lengthy. He ruled out an exchange of diplomatic notes or a Ministry-to-Department agreement on FAMS, citing complications with the Russian inter-agency process.

#### AEROFLOT-RELATED ISSUES

16. (SBU) Levitin expressed concern about delays in obtaining code share approvals between Sky Team members and Aeroflot, especially since Aeroflot already has such code shares with airlines. He questioned whether there was unfair competition at play and urged resolution. Levitin claimed Aeroflot was being further disadvantaged since its Moscow-Washington-bound passengers must first disembark in New York -- a process that

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added nearly four hours. The Ambassador noted that the Department of Homeland Security is looking into the possibility of "progressive clearance" for this Aeroflot flight.

#### RAIL EQUIPMENT AGREEMENT WITH US TESTING CENTER

17. (SBU) Levitin said that MOT was ready to sign an agreement with the American Association of Railroads (AAR) Testing Center in Pueblo, Colorado for testing of certain-types of railroad equipment in the United States. MOT will issue an invitation to AAR to come to Moscow at the end of February. (Note: This agreement comes in response to a \$300,000 TDA grant approved for Russia in Fall 2005.)

#### SECURITY FORUM AT EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT

18. (SBU) The Minister stressed his support for a ministerial-level, international forum on transportation security. He noted that last year in Tokyo, Ministers had designated the annual European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), scheduled for May 31, as the venue for the forum. He urged Secretary Peters to accept his invitation to participate.

#### DOT MOSCOW CONFERENCE ON GROUND TRANSPORT

19. (U) Levitin reiterated his Ministry's support for the DOT-proposed conference on ground transport in Moscow in May. This is envisioned as a high profile event with a transportation security component. Levitin urged Secretary Peters and TSA Administrator Hawley to accept his invitation to participate. He suggested the conference be held May 28-29, immediately before the Sofia ECMT meeting so that Peters and Hawley could participate in both.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) Levitin came back from his trip to the States (the first ever for a Russian Minister of Transportation) clearly buoyed by the experience and motivated to deepen bilateral ties. He noted his good friendship with former Secretary Mineta, a tradition he wants to continue with Secretary Peters and Administrator Hawley. The fall 2006 visit to Moscow by Deputy Secretary Cino and Levitin's reciprocal visit to Washington has created some useful momentum on the bilateral transportation front, and could help to unlock a number of difficult issues on the agenda, including state flights and FAMS, as well as lock in mutually beneficial gains during this spring's civair talks. Post appreciates Washington's continued efforts to provide prompt responses to outstanding Russian questions.

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